
ABROAD

ASUNCION

Sinking

The power of South America's most inflexible and obdurate ruler, General Alfredo Stroessner, president of Paraguay for more than thirty years, is slowly crumbling, foreign diplomats here believe, mostly because of the increasing hostility of the United States. General Stroessner is being hostile in return. Almost every day there is an attack, in the press or in some official communication, on the American ambassador, Clyde Taylor, including accusations that he has had contact with members of the opposition political coalition. Washington has cast highly public doubt on the quality of Paraguayan democracy, and its actions match its words. The United States no longer sends any economic aid to Paraguay; the last loan from the Agency for Economic Development was in 1979. Military assistance has been reduced to a training program for Paraguayan military personnel in the United States. The whole regime, along with General Stroessner himself, has grown old in the past few years, according to observers, and it is losing the support of the industrial community, of the Church, and even of certain sectors of the official Colorado Party.

PEKING

Twenty Years Later, Silence

Twenty years ago this May, a whirlwind called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began to sweep through China, killing millions of people, overthrowing the country's political foundations, demoralizing elites in industry, the academy, the army, and the Communist Party, and paralyzing the economy for years. It humiliated the present leadership of China, in particular its patriarch Deng Xiaoping, and spread confusion and disaster into almost every corner of Chinese life. The anniversary has been greeted by complete silence, as though to mention the Cultural Revolution would be to call forth avenging ghosts from the tomb. Neither in the press nor in any official speeches or commentaries has there been a word about it. Those now in their thirties and forties who lived through it are reluctant to say anything about it either, beyond assurances to the younger generation that present times are rosy in comparison with the past—assurances the young meet with scorn. The current youth of China, the products of officially encouraged single-child families, have been spoiled by their grandparents and are impatient for greater material well-being.

MESSINA

Big Game

The environmental movement has aroused predictable opposition in a country where the right to shoot wild birds and animals is a prized symbol of virility, as well as a source of food. Someone's temper rose to the point of fire-bombing the car of a female delegate to a bird-protection conference here in May. The Straits of Messina between Italy and Sicily are a well-known migratory route, especially for birds of prey, and these raptors are special objects of the hunter's urge even though they cannot be eaten. Though birds of prey are officially protected, hundreds of poachers wait on each side of the strait, many in bunk-

ers and shooting platforms on the tops of houses. More than one thousand eagles, hawks, and owls were shot down this year. Environmental groups are busy collecting signatures for a referendum that would condemn the practice of hunting altogether. Under the Italian system, such a referendum cannot overturn a law already on the books, but it could exert political pressure on the government to declare a five-year moratorium. There are more than a million and a half licensed hunters in Italy.

ROME

An Eiffel Tower

Everyone expects the buildings of ancient Rome such as the Colosseum to suffer from the corrosive effects of twentieth-century pollution, especially automobile fumes. But it comes as something of a shock to learn that the vast, white Victor Emmanuel Monument—the “wedding cake”—built in 1911, is now also in danger of crumbling. This huge pile of unweathering marble sits in the vortex of Roman traffic facing the Piazza Venezia, in the middle of the city. The monument was built to honor the memory of the King of Savoy, and it also incorporates the Tomb of Italy's Unknown Soldier. Recently the monument's flanks have been covered by tarpaulins, and a piece of gesso fell off the frieze of the sweeping central colonnade onto the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier itself. Fissures have appeared in the marble blocks of the surface; experts fear that the great pile is actually shifting its foundations. Municipal authorities have no special funds to undertake what looks like a long, complicated, and costly job of restoration, but they cheerfully count on the support of the public. “The people will be our sponsors,” says one official. “After all, was the Eiffel Tower ever allowed to fall down?”

SEOUL

Visiting Rights

Negotiations between Seoul and Pyongyang under the auspices of the Red Cross have resulted in a modest beginning of exchange among families separated by the Korean War. One hundred such “home visits” have been scheduled to take place. South Korea had hoped many more would be permitted to cross the boundary of the 38th Parallel, but disagreements on procedure stood in the way. Similar negotiations in the 1970s came to nothing.



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